The Erotic Horror Classic Of Female Vampirism!

CARMILLA

For Adults Only...

WARNING!

THIS PAPER WRAPPER IS DESIGNED TO PROTECT YOUNG EYES FROM A

DAVE DORMAN NUDE COVER PAINTING

A • AIRCEL COMICS • #1 (of 6) • $2.50/$3.00 in Canada

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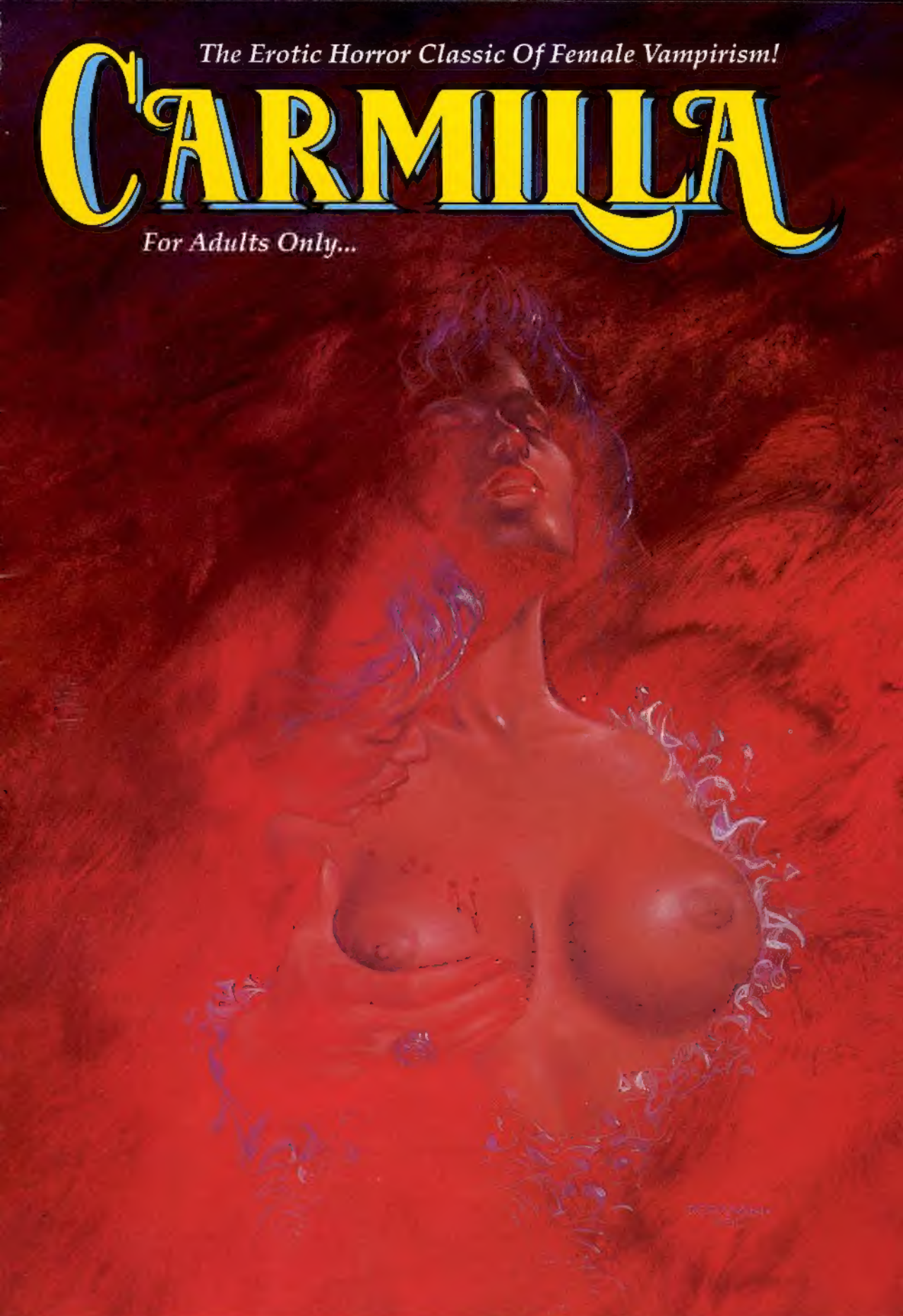

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Based On The Story by Sheridan Le Fanu

I have just had an interesting experience. For the first (and probably the last) time, my name has appeared in an article in *Fangoria* magazine. *Fangoria Horror Spectacular*, to be precise. (And, before I forget, I want to thank the Competition Canary for dropping off a copy to me.)

It wasn't a complete surprise. Daniel Schweiger telephoned me way May last to interview me for his article, "Comics That Bleed." Still, unaccustomed as I am to seeing my name published in anything outside of Malibu's monthly trifecta of distributor catalogs, I still feel amazed and confused whenever I read my name in any kind of publication I didn't personally write.

Carmilla is the main topic of my section of Schweiger's article, although it also briefly mentions my work on Malibu's adaptation of the 1985 cult film *Re-Animator* (more on that in a future issue). "Steve Jones will...be pouring his blood into revising...a classic horror tale with Aircel's *Carmilla*."

According to Schweiger, "This ground-breaking vampire fable brings the gorgeous creature of the night to an isolated Austrian castle, where she quickly becomes the paramour of a young servant." (Actually, she becomes the "paramour" of the castle's mistress, but let's not get nit-picky.) The article continues, "'Since *Carmilla* was one of the first horror stories to deal with that undercurrent of lesbianism, I wanted to faithfully adapt it while hyping the sex and gore elements.'" (For the record, Mr. Chairman, I have never said the word "hype" in my life.)

While I didn't exactly say all of this, I guess it comes close enough to explaining what I was attempting while adapting this story. There's a lot more going on in these issues of *Carmilla* than sweaty naked women and the occasional gore shot. (For one thing, there's a super cool sword fight in issue #2) And...whoops! We're almost out of room!

Tell you what. If you promise to come back here next issue, I'll fill you in on all the behind-the-scenes gossip. Just like on E-TV! (If you don't, I'll just have to talk to myself, and you wouldn't want that. Would you? Hey! Is anybody out there?)

–Steve

"O Sovereign of the willing Soul,
Parent of sweet and solemn-breathing arms,
Enchanting shell! the sullen Cares
And frantic Passions hear thy soft control."
"Progress of Poesy" (Gray)

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JOHN ROSS
Artist
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BRENT CARPENTER
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PROLOGUE: AN EARLY FRIGHT (13 YEARS AGO)...
"HOW CAREFUL WAS I, WHEN I TOOK MY WAY,
"EACH TRIFLE UNDER TRUEST BARS TO THRUST,
"THAT TO MY USE IT MIGHT UNUSED STAY,
"FROM HANDS OF FALSEHOOD, IN SURE WARDS OF TRUST!
"BUT THOU, TO WHOM MY JEWELS TRIFLES ARE, "MOST WORTHY COMFORT, NOW MY GREATEST GRIEF, "THOU, BEST OF DEAREST AND MINE ONLY CARE, "ART LEFT THE PREY OF EVERY VULGAR THIEF.
1

"THEE HAVE I NOT *LOCA'D* UP IN ANY CHEST,

"SAVE WHERE THOU ART NOT, THOUGH I *FEEL* THOU ART,

"WITHIN THE GENTLE *CLOSURE* OF MY BREAST,

"FROM WHENCE AT *PLEASURE* THOU MAYEST COME AND PART;

"AND EVEN THENCE THOU *WILT* BE STOL'N, I FEAR,

"FOR TRUTH PROVES *THIEVISH* FOR A PRIZE SO DEAR.[1]"

2

1 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *SONNETS*, XLVIII

FATHER! MADAM PERRODON!

SHE WENT UNDER THE BED!

AND SHE *BIT* ME! ON MY CHEST!

I SEE NOTHING.

NOR I.

BUT SHE *CRAWLED* UNDERNEATH! I SWEAR, FATHER!

I KNOW. BUT YOU MUST HAVE BEEN *DREAMING*, LITTLE SWEET.

NIGHTMARES SELDOM DO.

DON'T FRET. MADAM PERRODON WILL *SIT* BY YOUR SIDE TONIGHT.

IT DIDN'T *FEEL* LIKE A DREAM.

WATCH HER CAREFULLY.

SOMEONE *DID* LIE UNDER THE BED. THE PLACE IS STILL WARM.

I. INTERLUDE: 'DECAY'

"OH, MILLARCA.

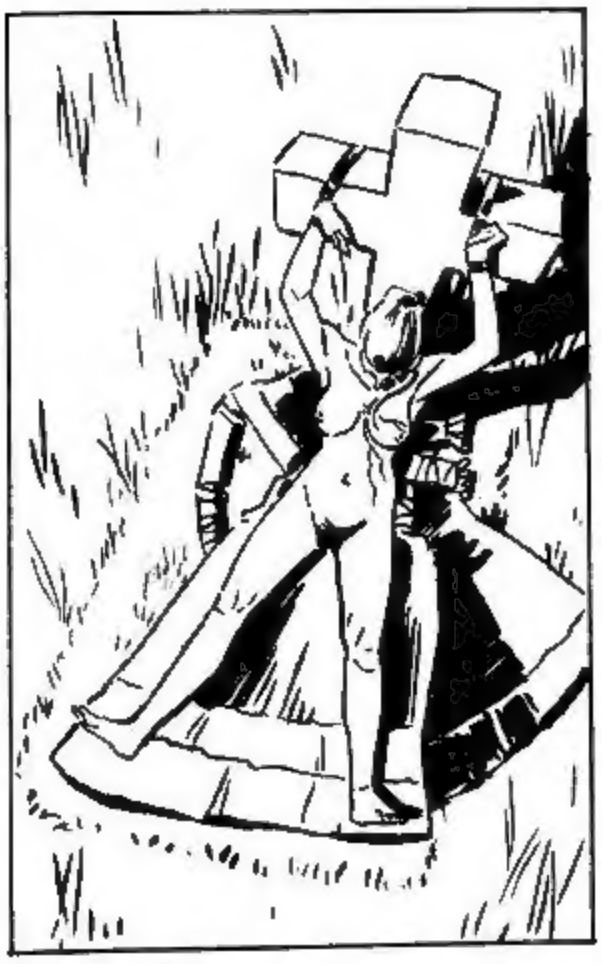
"MY DIVINE, ETERNAL MILLARCA.

"I FEEL.

"I FEEL SO MUCH.

"I FEEL...

"...SO FULFILLED."



II. 'A GUEST'

IS IT BAD NEWS, FATHER?

I'M AFRAID SO, LITTLE SWEET.

GENERAL SPIELSDORF CANNOT COME TO US AS SOON AS I HAD HOPED.

NOR MADEMOISELLE RHEINFELDT?

NO.

AND WHY?

BECAUSE THE POOR YOUNG LADY IS DEAD.

"SHE DIED IN THE GLORIOUS *HOPE* OF A BLESSED FUTURITY.

"THE FIEND WHO [redacted] OUR INFATUATED HOSPITALITY HAS DONE IT ALL.

"I DEVOTE MY REMAINING DAYS TO TRACKING DOWN AND *EXTINGUISHING* A MONSTER.

"I CURSE MY CONCEITED *INCREDULITY*, MY DESPICABLE AFFECTATION OF SUPERIORITY, MY BLINDNESS, MY OBSTINACY--ALL--TOO LATE.

"I MEAN TO DEVOTE MYSELF FOR A TIME TO *INQUIRY*, WHICH MAY LEAD ME AS FAR AS VIENNA."

"SOME TIME IN THE AUTUMN, TWO MONTHS HENCE, OR *EARLIER* IF I LIVE, I WILL SEE YOU--

"THAT IS, IF YOU *PERMIT* ME.

"FAREWELL. *PRAY* FOR ME, DEAR FRIEND!"

WAS EVER A BEING SO BORN TO CALAMITY?

HOW IS MY *CHILD*, VAVASOR?

MY NAME IS TOBIAS, MADAM. A *NOBLEMAN* AT YOUR SERVICE.

HER PULSE IS FAINT AND IRREGULAR, BUT UNDOUBTEDLY STILL DISTINGUISHABLE.

OH, WHAT AM I TO DO ? I AM ON A JOURNEY OF LIFE AND DEATH.
TO LOSE AN HOUR IS POSSIBLY TO LOSE ALL.
MY CHILD WILL NOT HAVE RECOVERED SUFFICIENTLY TO RESUME HER ROUTE FOR WHO CAN SAY HOW LONG.
HOW FAR ON, SIR, CAN YOU TELL ME IS THE NEAREST VILLAGE ?
I MUST LEAVE HER THERE; AND SHALL NOT SEE HER UNTIL MY RETURN, THREE MONTHS HENCE.
OH! PAPA, PRAY ASK HER TO LET HER DAUGHTER STAY WITH US -- IT WOULD BE SO DELIGHTFUL DO, PRAY.

I CANNOT DO THAT, SIR. IT WOULD BE TO TASK YOUR KINDNESS AND CHIVALRY TOO CRUELLY.

ON THE CONTRARY.

MY DAUGHTER SARAH HAS JUST BEEN DISAPPOINTED IN A VISIT SHE HAD LONG ANTICIPATED.

BESIDES, THE NEAREST VILLAGE ON YOUR ROUTE IS DISTANT AND AFFORDS NO INN.

SO IT SEEMS IF YOU CANNOT SUSPEND YOUR JOURNEY, YOU MUST PART WITH YOUR CHILD TONIGHT.

THEN SO BE IT, BUT ON A CONDITION.

ONE THAT I SHALL CONFER UPON YOUR HONOR, SIR.

DID YOU REMARK A WOMAN IN THE CARRIAGE, AFTER IT WAS SET UP AGAIN, WHO DID *NOT* GET OUT ?

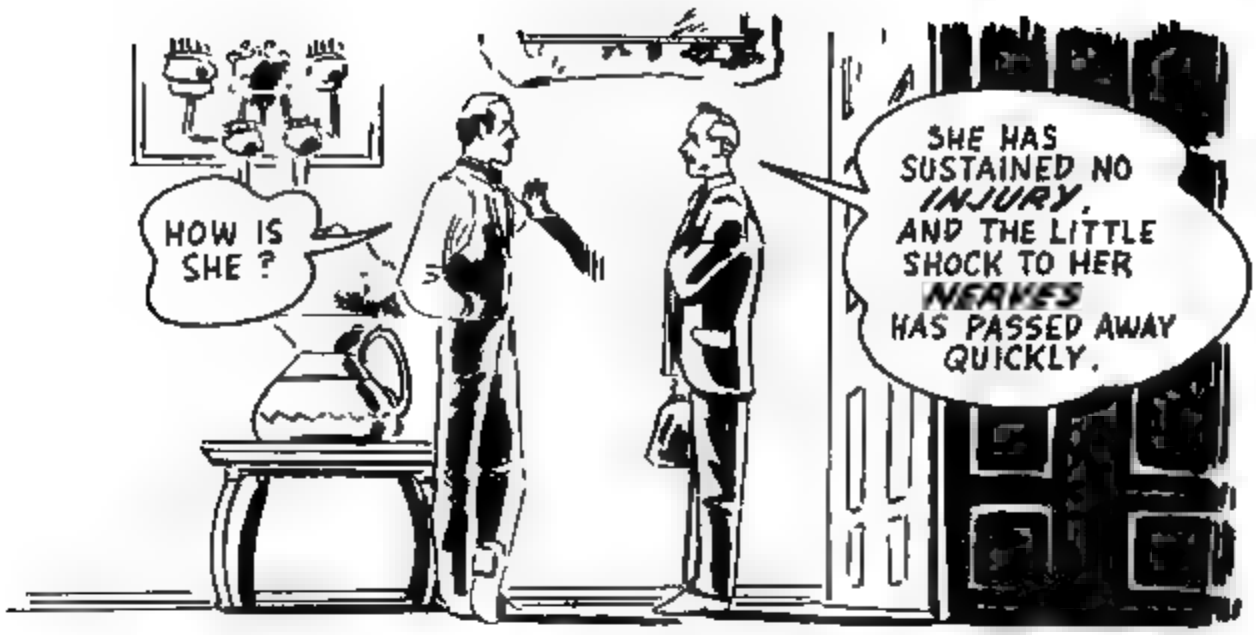
NO, I DID NOT.

SHE WAS A HIDEOUS BLACK WOMAN, WITH A SORT OF COLORED TURBAN ON HER HEAD

HOW *AWFUL!*

THE MOON, THIS NIGHT, IS FULL OF ODYLIC AND MAGNETIC INFLUENCE.

PERHAPS THAT EXPLAINS WHY THE PATIENT IS DOING SO WELL, MADAM PERRODON.


HOW IS SHE ?
SHE HAS SUSTAINED NO INJURY, AND THE LITTLE SHOCK TO HER NERVES HAS PASSED AWAY QUICKLY.

MAY I GO UP TO SEE HER, DOCTOR ?
I SEE NO HARM, IF ONLY FOR A FEW MINUTES.

STRANGE HOW THIS GIRL CAME INTO YOUR CARE. HER MOTHER TOLD YOU SHE IS IN DELICATE HEALTH ?
AND NERVOUS, BUT NOT SUBJECT TO ANY KIND OF SEIZURE .

HOW ODD. SHE IS A LOVELY CHILD, IF NOT LANGUID, BUT OTHERWISE IN THE PINK OF HEALTH, CONSIDERING THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

knock knock

ENTER FREELY.

MAY I COME IN?

PLEASE.

I'M SO GLAD TO FINALLY MEET...

OH!

HOW WONDERFUL!

TWELVE YEARS AGO, I SAW YOUR FACE IN A DREAM, AND IT HAS *HAUNTED* ME EVER SINCE.

WONDERFUL INDEED!

TWELVE YEARS AGO, IN VISION OR REALITY, I CERTAINLY SAW YOU.

PLEASE, I MUST TELL YOU MY *VISION* ABOUT YOU.

I WAS A CHILD, ABOUT SIX YEARS OLD, AND I AWOKE FROM A *CONFUSED* AND TROUBLED DREAM.

I FOUND MYSELF IN A ROOM, UNLIKE MY NURSERY, AND *CREPT* UNDER ONE OF THE BEDS TO REACH THE WINDOW.

AS I GOT OUT FROM UNDER, I HEARD *SOMEONE* CRYING.

LOOKING UP, I SAW *YOU* AS I SEE YOU NOW; A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG LADY, WITH GOLDEN HAIR AND LARGE BLUE EYES.

YOUR LOOKS WON ME; AND I CLIMBED ON THE BED AND PUT MY *ARMS* ABOUT YOU, AND I THINK WE BOTH FELL ASLEEP.

YOUR FACE I HAVE *NEVER* FORGOTTEN.

III 'A SAUNTER'

GOOD AFTERNOON, LITTLE SWEET WHERE IS OUR GUEST ?

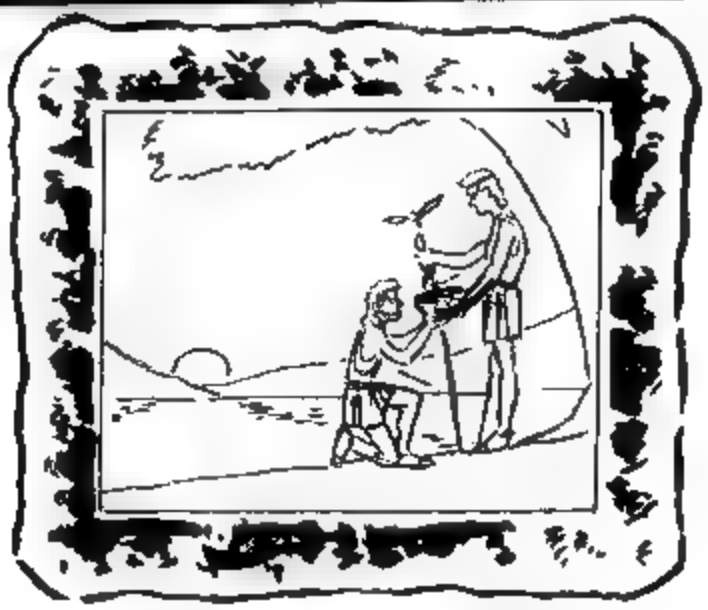
JUST COMING DOWN, FATHER.

NOW ? BUT IT'S NEARLY ONE O'CLOCK !

I KNOW YOU GAVE HER MOTHER YOUR WORD OF HONOR, FATHER, BUT IS THERE *ANYTHING* YOU CAN SHARE WITH ME ABOUT CARMILLA ?

PERHAPS.

SHE TOLD ME, IN THE PUREST FRENCH, SHE WAS ON A LONG JOURNEY OF *VITAL* IMPORTANCE, RAPID AND SECRET.



I HOPE I HAVE NOT DONE A VERY *FOOLISH* THING, IN TAKING CHARGE OF THE YOUNG LADY.

IS THERE *NOTHING* YOU CAN TELL ME OF YOURSELF ?

THREE THINGS. FIRST--MY NAME IS *CARMILLA*; THAT YOU KNOW.

NOTHING MORE ? NOT THE NAME OF YOUR FAMILY ? THEIR AMORIAL BEARINGS ? THE NAME OF YOUR ESTATE ? THE COUNTRY YOU LIVE IN ?

NOT NOW. NOT...

SECOND--MY FAMILY IS VERY ANCIENT AND NOBLE.

THIRD--MY HOME LAYS IN THE DIRECTION OF THE WEST.

...YET ?

WHAT IS THAT NOISE ? WHAT ARE THEY SINGING ?

A FUNERAL HYMN.

IT PIERCES MY EARS !

"SHE IS THE POOR GIRL WHO FANCIED SHE SAW A GHOST A FORTNIGHT AGO, AND HAS BEEN DYING EVER SINCE, TILL YESTERDAY, WHEN SHE EXPIRED.

"THE SWINEHERD'S YOUNG WIFE DIED ONLY A WEEK AGO, AND SHE THOUGHT SOMETHING SEIZED HER BY THE THROAT AS SHE LAY IN HER BED."

TELL ME *NOTHING* ABOUT GHOSTS. I SHAN'T SLEEP TONIGHT IF YOU DO.

WHAT A FUSS! WHY *YOU* MUST DIE--*EVERYONE* MUST DIE; AND ALL ARE HAPPIER WHEN THEY DO.

DEAREST, YOUR LITTLE HEART IS WOUNDED.

THINK ME NOT CRUEL BECAUSE I OBEY THE IRRESISTIBLE LAW OF MY STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS.

IF YOUR DEAR HEART IS WOUNDED, MY WILD HEART BLEEDS WITH YOURS.

IN THE RAPTURE OF MY *ENORMOUS* HUMILIATION I LIVE IN YOUR WARM LIFE, AND YOU *SHALL* DIE-- DIE, SWEETLY DIE--INTO MINE.

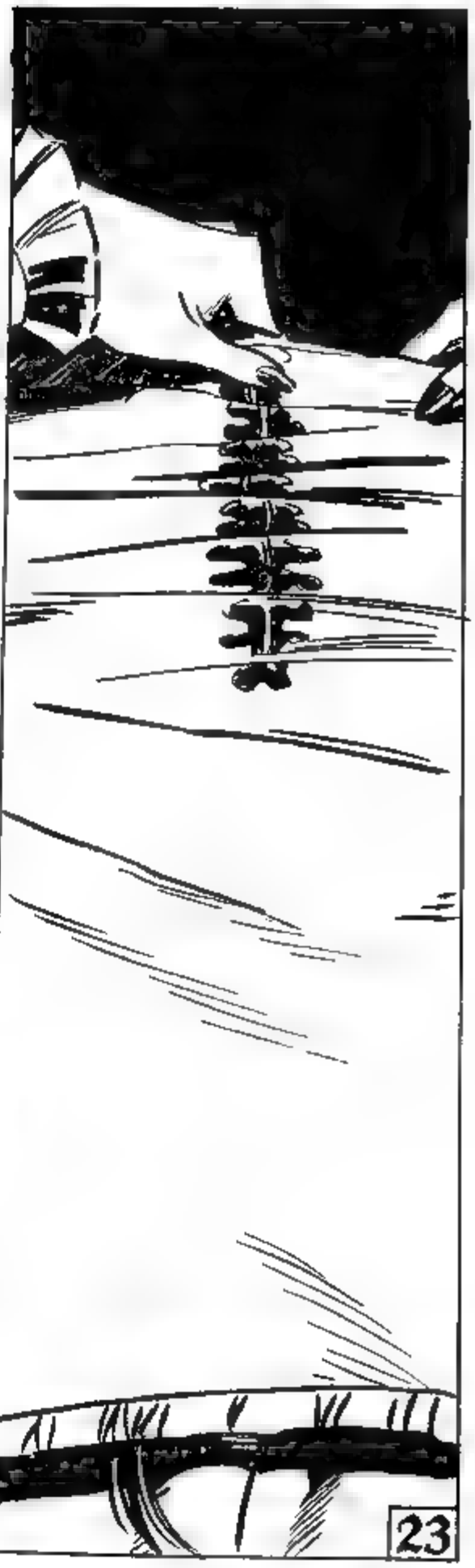
I CANNOT HELP IT.

AS I DRAW NEAR TO YOU, YOU, IN YOUR TURN, WILL DRAW NEAR TO OTHERS, AND LEARN THE RAPTURE OF THAT CRUELTY, WHICH YET IS LOVE.

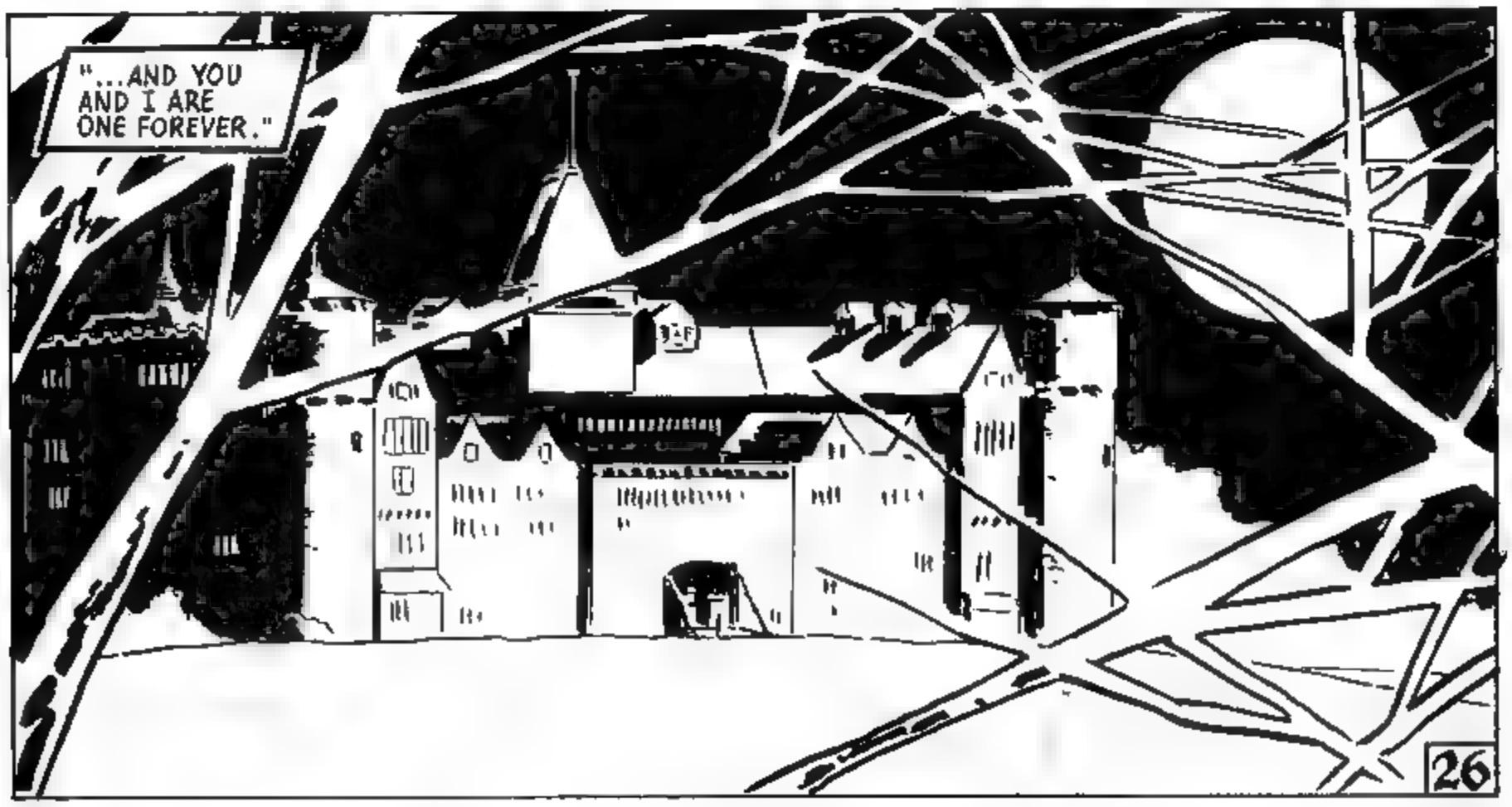
SO, FOR A WHILE, SEEK TO KNOW NO MORE OF ME AND MINE...

...BUT TRUST ME WITH ALL YOUR LOVING SPIRIT.

IV. INTERLUDE II: 'IMPARTATION'



"YOU ARE MINE, YOU SHALL BE MINE...


"...AND YOU AND I ARE ONE FOREVER."
26

27

The Erotic Horror Classic Of Female Vampirism!

CARMILLA

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Based On The Story by Sheridan Le Fanu

So where were we?

Oh, yes! I was going to tell you how there was more going on in *Carmilla* than just vampires and naked women having at it with one another and what not. (Didn't I tell you last time there was one nifty sword fight in this issue?)

I'm going to let you in on a little secret here. This mini series and two others I've written for Malibu Graphics—*Dracula* and *Invaders From Mars*—are actually all part of an unofficial trilogy. You know how us writer types just love to write trilogies! It makes us feel like we've done a lot of work and tried to say something with meaning.

Believe it or not, this trilogy is based on a theme rather than a collection of characters. The theme in question? Maturation.

In *Invaders From Mars*, the reader follows the 12 year old main character, Josh Acri, as he abandons the safety of love of his parents for the good of his community and his own survival. We all have to begin that process sometime which eventually allows us to support ourselves in our own lives, most of us just don't have a Martian invasion prodding us along.

In *Dracula*, it's the maturation of society that is at issue, the abandonment of the superstitions and romance of an agrarian commun'ty for the modern and post modern advances of the industrial and communication revolutions. In Bram Stoker's novel Dracula is an Anti-Christ figure who is hunted and killed by 19th century knights baring Winchesters and train schedules. When Count Dracula bites the dust, so to speak, the last living symbol of the Romantic Age dies as well. Society is free to progress rationally, scientifically and unimaginatively.

Here, in *Carmilla*, we explore a more personal version of maturation: sexual awakening. Our main character, Sarah, has never even been kissed when Carmilla arrives, by the end of this issue she is in love with her dark visitor. When Sarah eventually discovers the truth behind her lover's identity, she is less horrified Carmilla is a vampire than in the fact she has been betrayed. Many of us, unless prodded, tend to forget about the pain and humiliation we experienced at the hands of our first loves. In this adaptation of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's vampire story, I do my best to unceremoniously stir up some of those unpleasant memories.

Okay, now we know what Steven Jones was up to when he adapted *Carmilla*. If you're interested in what Le Fanu may have been up to when he wrote his wonderful story... you'll just have to come back here next issue. (Ain't I a stinker?)

Steven Jones

STEVEN JONES
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•
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BRENT CARPENTER
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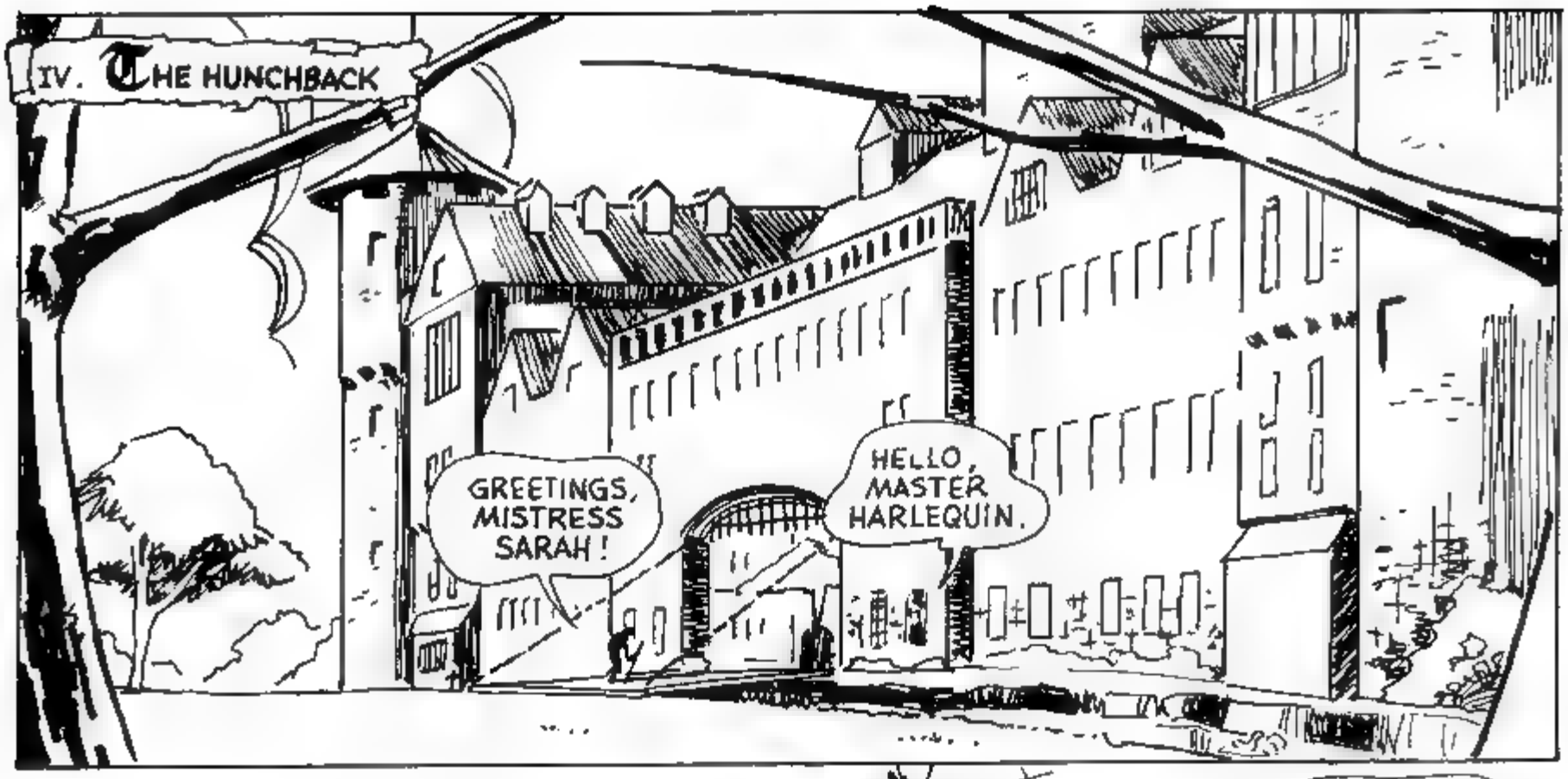

IV. THE HUNCHBACK
GREETINGS, MISTRESS SARAH!
HELLO, MASTER HARLEQUIN.

WE'VE NOT SEEN YOU IN OVER A YEAR.
MY PATH HAS BEEN DARK. SPREADING MY *LIGHT* HAS BEEN SLOW. BUT HERE I AM!

SHALL I *ENTERTAIN* YOU LADIES WITH MUSIC? VIVALDI? BACH?

MAYHAP A RECITATION? JONSON? THE BARD?

OR COULD SOME *EXERTION* BE THE DIVERSION YOU'RE BOTH AFTER?
1

"ALL THE RESOURCES OF THE *VARIOUS* ARTS AND THE CURIOSITIES AND THE ENTERTAINMENTS WHICH ARE IN MY *POWER* ARE AT YOUR BIDDING."

WILL YOUR LADYSHIPS BE PLEASED TO BUY AN AMULET AGAINST THE OUPINE, WHICH IS GOING LIKE A WOLF THROUGH THE WOODS?

THEY ARE DYING OF IT RIGHT AND LEFT, AND HERE IS A *CHARM* THAT NEVER FAILS.

ONLY PINNED TO THE PILLOW, AND YOU MAY *LAUGH* IN HIS FACE

CIEL!

"THIS IS WONDROUS STRANGE."

SEE HERE, MY LADY--

--I PROFESS, AMONG OTHER THINGS *LESS* USEFUL, THE ART OF DENTISTRY.

YOUR NOBLE FRIEND HAS THE SHARPEST TOOTH-- LONG, THIN, POINTED LIKE AN AWL, LIKE A NEEDLE; HA, HA !

IF IT HAPPENS TO *HURT* THE YOUNG LADY, AND I THINK IT MUST, HERE I AM, HERE ARE MY FILE, MY PUNCH, MY NIPPERS.

I WILL MAKE IT ROUND AND BLUNT; NO LONGER THE TOOTH OF A FISH BUT OF A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG LADY AS SHE IS.

HOW DARES THAT MOUNTEBANK INSULT US SO ? WHERE IS YOUR FATHER ?

HEY ? HAVE I BEEN TOO BOLD ? HAVE I OFFENDED THE YOUNG LADY ?

MY FATHER WOULD HAVE HAD THE WRETCH TIED UP TO PUMP, AND FLOGGED WITH A CARTWHIP, AND BURNT TO THE BONES WITH THE CASTLE BRAND !

PLEASE *FORGIVE* MY FRIEND, GOOD SIR. SHE HAS SUFFERED MANY *MISFORTUNES* RECENTLY.

IF YOU GO TO THE *KITCHEN*, MADAM PERRODON WILL PAY AND FEED YOU.

THANK YOU, MISTRESS.

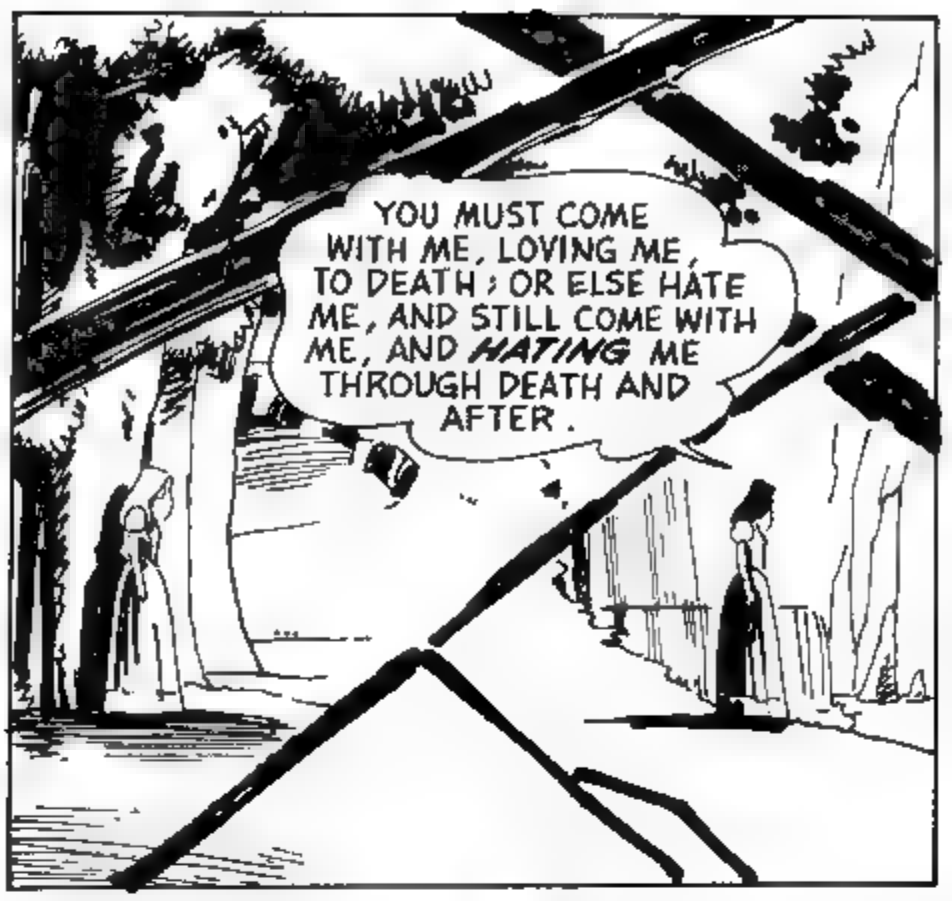
NOW, REALLY, CARMILLA, THERE WAS NO CALL FOR THAT.

HMMM ?

CARMILLA ?

V. INTERLUDE III
RECOGNITION

HOW JEALOUS I AM YOU CANNOT KNOW.


YOU MUST COME WITH ME, LOVING ME, TO DEATH; OR ELSE HATE ME, AND STILL COME WITH ME, AND *HATING* ME THROUGH DEATH AND AFTER.

THERE IS NO SUCH WORD AS *INDIFFERENCE* IN MY APATHETIC NATURE.

CARMILLA!

JOIN ME, SARAH!

"JOIN ME."

"JOIN ME."

"JOIN ME."

YES.

"YES"

"WERE YOU EVER AT A BALL ?"

"NO. WHAT IS IT LIKE? HOW *CHARMING* IT MUST BE."

"I ALMOST FORGET, IT IS YEARS AGO."

"YOU ARE NOT SO OLD. YOUR FIRST BALL CAN HARDLY BE FORGETTEN YET."

"I REMEMBER EVERYTHING ABOUT IT--I WAS ALL BUT *ASSASSINATED*, WOUNDED HERE, NEAR MY HEART "

I... Father and I are very anxious for you and your uncle to visit.

"ALL DUE TO LOVE. A *CRUEL* LOVE-- STRANGE LOVE, THAT WOULD HAVE TAKEN MY LIFE."

SARAH ?

I MUST *TALK* WITH YOU.

IT'S TIME. I WANT YOU TO KNOW *EVERYTHING* ABOUT ME.

"LOVE WILL HAVE ITS *SACRIFICES*. NO SACRIFICE WITHOUT BLOOD "

I HAVE WATCHED YOU FROM A DISTANCE FOR MANY MONTHS, BUT DID NOT KNOW HOW TO WIN YOUR CONFIDENCE.

I LOVE YOU, SARAH

CARMIL... *SIR!* THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE!

WHY ? AM I THE FIRST MAN TO *DISGUISE* HIMSELF TO ACQUIRE THE FRIENDSHIP OF A LADY HE LOVES ? NO !

AND I *DO* LOVE YOU, SARAH.

BUT...

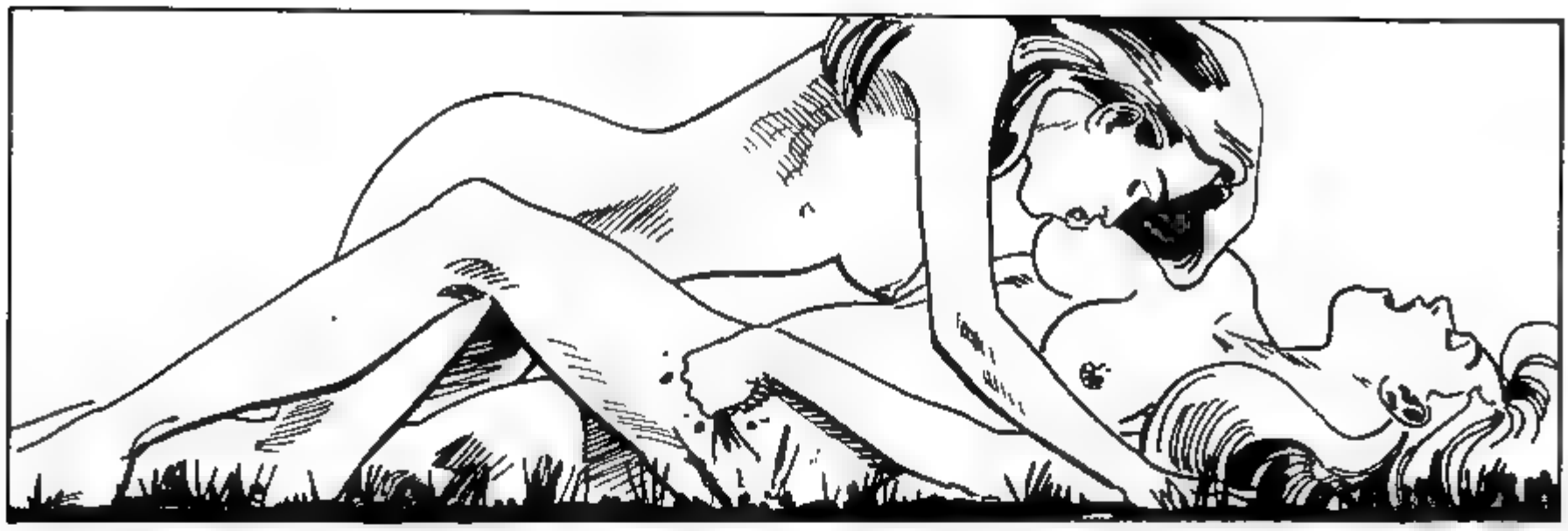
I LOVE YOU.

CARMILLA!

I HAVE BEEN IN LOVE WITH *NO ONE* AND NEVER SHALL, UNLESS IT SHOULD BE WITH YOU, SARAH.

DARLING, DARLING.

I LIVE IN YOU; AND YOU WOULD *DIE* FOR ME, I LOVE YOU SO.



MY SENSES SWOON IN ECSTASY.
I WISH YOU ALL THE JOY THAT YOU CAN WISH.

JOY SHALL RULE THE DAY AND LOVE THE NIGHT.
IN ADAMANTINE CHAINS SHALL DEATH BE BOUND.

THOU SHALT FLOURISH IN IMMORTAL YOUTH.

VI CONFRONTATION

"GOOD EVENING, GENERAL SPIELSDORF. WELCOME BACK TO VIENNA."

THANK YOU, LEWIS.

MAY I INQUIRE IF A FRIEND OF MINE, *COUNTESS DOLINGEN* OF GRATZ, IS STAYING HERE?

YES, GENERAL SHE IS.

"SHE IS IN SUITE 405, ENTERTAINING SOME.. *'GUESTS'*."

YOU!

FAR ENOUGH, GENERAL. TURN AROUND. GO HOME AND *DIE* IN YOUR BED. IF YOU TAKE ANOTHER STEP FORWARD--

405

405

"--I'LL SUNDER YOUR HEART AND THE MADAMS WILL LICK UP YOUR BLOOD."

"BOLD WORDS, BLACK-GUARD."

MON DIEU!

ENFORCE THEM!

YOU ARE QUICK, OLD MAN.

QUICKER THAN YOU'LL LIKE.

SEE?

UNNNH--!

YES, I DO. I SEE YOU ARE MORE TROUBLE THAN YOUR WORTH !

oh

FOR WHAT YOU DID TO MY NIECE, YOU BASTARD.

"AND NOW--"

--COUNTESS! IT SEEMS WE HAVE A *FAMILY* MATTER TO ATTEND TO.

WHA... *CYRENE!*

YOUR MAN, MADAM? HE AWAITS YOU IN HELL.

CYRENE? NO.

NO!

NOOO!

GAHN**!

A FLASH OF LIGHTNING, A CLAP OF THUNDER, AND--

MAY THE DEVIL HIMSELF GREET YOU IN...

...Hades

IT WILL HAVE *BLOOD*, THEY SAY: BLOOD WILL HAVE BLOOD.

BY...BY THE PRICKING OF MY THUMBS!

SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES.

VII. A STRANGE AGONY

Tee-nee Tee-hee

GIRLS! ISN'T IT BAD ENOUGH I SPENT THE DAY IN TOWN--

--WATCHING THEM *BURY* THE THIRD POOR GIRL TO DIE OF THIS PLAGUE IN AS MANY WEEKS ? THE DOCTOR CAN DO *NOTHING* TO PREVENT ITS SPREADING.

DOCTORS NEVER DID ME ANY GOOD.

THEN YOU HAVE BEEN ILL ?

MORE ILL THAN YOU EVER WERE.

IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO. I SUFFERED FROM THIS *VERY* ILLNESS, BUT I FORGET ALL BUT MY PAIN AND WEAKNESS

YOU WERE YOUNG THEN ?

I DARE SAY; LET'S TALK NO MORE OF IT.

"I WAS DREAMING. OR SO I THOUGHT."

"I COULD FEEL COOL WATER RUSHING AGAINST MY CHEST."

"GRADUALLY, IT BECOME DIFFICULT TO BREATHE. I TRIED TO FORCE MYSELF AWAKE."

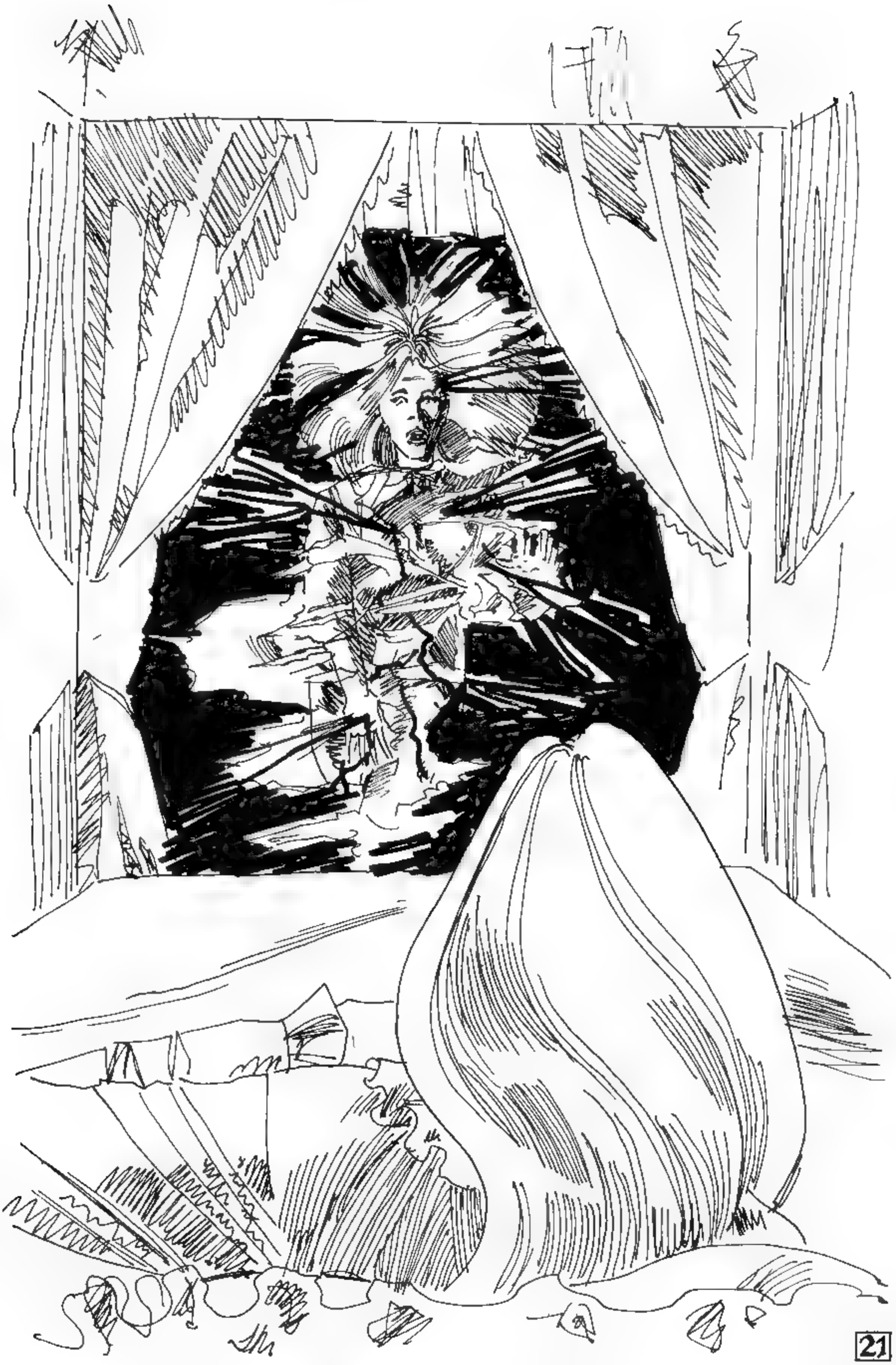
'AT FIRST I BELIEVED I'D SUCCEEDED."

"THEN I SAW IT."

"I COULD NOT CRY OUT, ALTHOUGH AS YOU MAY SUPPOSE, I WAS TERRIFIED."

"IT'S PACE WAS GROWING FASTER, AND THE ROOM RAPIDLY DARKER AND DARKER."

"I FELT IT SPRING LIGHTLY ON THE BED."



FATHER! MADAM PERRODON!

SARAH! MADAM PERRODON! WHAT'S THE MATTER?

CARMILLA! A DREAM! SHE'S BEING *MURDERED!*

ALL THIS FUSS OVER A DREAM, LITTLE SWEET? HONESTLY.

I CAN FEEL IT, FATHER. SOMETHING'S WRONG!

PERHAPS YOU SHOULD KNOCK, SIR?

OF COURSE I'LL KNOCK, MADAM PERRODON.

CARMILLA? PLEASE OPEN UP. IT'S TOBIAS, CARMILLA?

CARMILLA! YOU'RE ALL RIGHT!

YES? IS SOMETHING WRONG?

VIII. A WONDERFUL LIKENESS

knock knock

ENTER.

ARE YOU STILL WEAK ? YOUR FATHER FEARS YOU *MAY* HAVE THE PLAGUE.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ? DO I NEED THE HUNCHBACK'S AMULET ?

IF I THOUGHT THAT, I WOULDN'T DO THIS.

FEEL BETTER ?

A LITTLE, YES. THANK YOU.

YOU JUST NEED A LITTLE ATTENTION. A LITTLE ACTIVITY.

YOUR *FATHER* WOULD LIKE YOU TO COME DOWNSTAIRS. SOME *PORTRAITS* ARE JUST RETURNING FROM A PICTURE-CLEANER IN GRATZ.

I'D RATHER BE ALONE WITH YOU.

I HAD A DREAM LIKE *YOURS* ONCE. I THOUGHT I AWOKE TO FIND A FEMALE FIGURE, DRESSED IN BLACK, STANDING BY MY BED.

A BLOCK OF STONE COULD *NOT* HAVE BEEN MORE STILL.

AS I STARED AT IT, THE *FIGURE* APPEARED TO CHANGE ITS PLACE.

NOW NEARER THE DOOR; THAN, CLOSE TO IT, THE DOOR OPENED, AND IT PASSED OUT.

BUT NO MORE ABOUT NIGHTMARES. PLEASE GET UP. DON'T *DISAPPOINT* YOUR FATHER OR ME.

ALL RIGHT IF YOU INSIST.

AH, LITTLE SWEET! I'M GLAD YOU'RE ON YOUR FEET.

I FORGOT WE SHIPPED SO MANY PORTRAITS!

WHY SO MANY?

SARAH'S MOTHER WAS FROM AN OLD *HUNGARIAN* FAMILY. MOST OF THESE PICTURES CAME THROUGH HER.

MANY ARE SO OLD THAT THE SMOKE AND DUST OF TIME HAD ALL BUT OBLITERATED THE IMAGES UNDERNEATH.

FATHER!

LOOK AT THIS!

OH, YES. I WAS CURIOUS TO SEE HOW *THIS* ONE CAME OUT. IT'S DATED 1698.

"THE SUBJECT IS MARCIA KARNSTEIN."

"BUT, IT'S THE EFFIGY OF CARMILLA !"

Mircalla, Countess Karnstein
A.D. 1698

A • AIRCEL COMICS • #3 (of 6) • $2.50/$3.00 in Canada

Based On The Story by Sheridan Le Fanu

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu has been called "England's only great writer of the supernatural," and one of his final stories, *Carmilla*, has been called "probably the best vampire story ever written."

He was born in 1814, the grand nephew of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and grew up to write stories that, in the words of Professor Robert Donald Spector of Long Island University, "bristle with a faith in the occult and mysterious." Le Fanu married in 1844, spent 14 blissful years with his exceptional bride, and was crushed by her unexpected death in 1858. He lived as a recluse for the remainder of his life, withdrawing into his house in Merrion Square, Dublin, venturing out only during the late afternoon to haunt second hand bookshops, looking for ghost stories. He rarely slept, plagued by a recurring nightmare of his house falling in on him, and spent the late evening and early morning hours in bed sipping green tea and writing his ghost stories.

Carmilla first appeared in the magazine "The Dark Blue" (1871) and was reprinted the following year in Le Fanu's collection, *In A Glass Darkly*. Unlike this adaptation, Le Fanu's original story suggested an undercurrent of homosexuality, an indelicate and taboo topic in most genres but not in the Gothic, where incest, murder and rape go hand in hand with "mysterious occurrences, haunted castles and erotic experiences." Laura, Le Fanu's heroine, writes:

Sometimes after an hour of apathy, [Carmilla] would take my hand and hold it with a fond pressure, renewed again and again, blushing softly, gazing in my face with languid and burning eyes, and breathing so fast that her dress rose and fell with the tumultuous respiration. It was like the ardor of a lover. It embarrassed me. It was hateful and yet overpowering.

According to Professor Spector, Le Fanu is "determined to demonstrate the victory of the irrational over the rational mind." General Spielsdorf, Laura's anonymous father, and Doctor Spielsberg must all come to terms with Carmilla's vampirism, accepting what their scientifically attuned minds tell them simply cannot be.

Le Fanu's name is not as famous here in America as Poe, Hawthorne, James or Lovecraft, but his writings are well worth the reading for anyone who loves a superior ghost story. Among Le Fanu's other works are "The House by The Churchyard," "Wylder's Hand," "Wyvery Mystery" and "Uncle Silas."

Steven Jones

"But first on earth, as Vampyre sent
Thy corse shall from its tomb be rent:
Then ghastly haunt thy native place,
And suck the blood of all thy race;
There from thy daughter, sister, wife,
At midnight drain the stream of life;
Yet loathe the banquet, which perforce
Must feed thy livid living corse."

Lord Byron, "Giaour"

STEVEN JONES
Script
•
JOHN ROSS
Artist
•
BRENT CARPENTER
Letterer
•
ALEXANDER JAMES KENT
Cover Illustration
•
TOM SMITH
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Editor-In-Chief
•
Tom Mason
Creative Director

CARMILLA #3 of 6 • March 1991
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All characters engaged in sexual activity are at least 18 years of age.

"CARMILLA, DEAR, HERE IS AN ABSOLUTE MIRACLE.

"HERE *YOU* ARE, LIVING, SMILING, READY TO SPEAK, IN THIS PICTURE."

ISN'T IT *BEAUTIFUL*, PAPA ? AND SEE, EVEN THE LITTLE *MOLE* ON HER THROAT.

CERTAINLY IT IS A *WONDERFUL* LIKENESS.

AND NOW YOU CAN READ QUITE *PLAINLY* THE NAME THAT IS WRITTEN IN THE CORNER.

IT IS NOT MARCIA; IT LOOKS AS IF IT WAS DONE IN GOLD.

Mircalla, Countess Karnstein A.D. 1698

THE NAME IS *MIRCALLA*, COUNTESS KARNSTEIN, AND THIS IS A LITTLE *CORONET* OVER IT, AND UNDERNEATH A.D. 1698.

I AM DESCENDED FROM THE KARNSTEINS: THAT IS, MAMMA WAS.

AH!, SO AM I, I THINK, A VERY *LONG* DESCENT, VERY ANCIENT.

ARE THERE ANY KARNSTEINS LIVING NOW?

NONE WHO BEAR THE SAME NAME. THE FAMILY WERE *RUINED* I BELIEVE, IN SOME CIVIL WARS, LONG AGO.

BUT THE RUINS OF THE CASTLE ARE *ONLY* ABOUT THREE MILES AWAY!

WILL YOU LET ME HANG THIS PICTURE IN MY ROOM, PAPA?

CERTAINLY, LITTLE SWEET. I'M VERY *GLAD* YOU THINK IT SO LIKE.

IT MUST BE *PRETTIER* EVEN THAN I THOUGHT IT, IF IT IS.

CARMILLA?

ARE YOU GLAD I CAME?

PARDON?

ARE YOU GLAD I'VE BEEN A GUEST IN YOUR BEAUTIFUL CHATEAU?

DELIGHTED, DEAR CARMILLA.

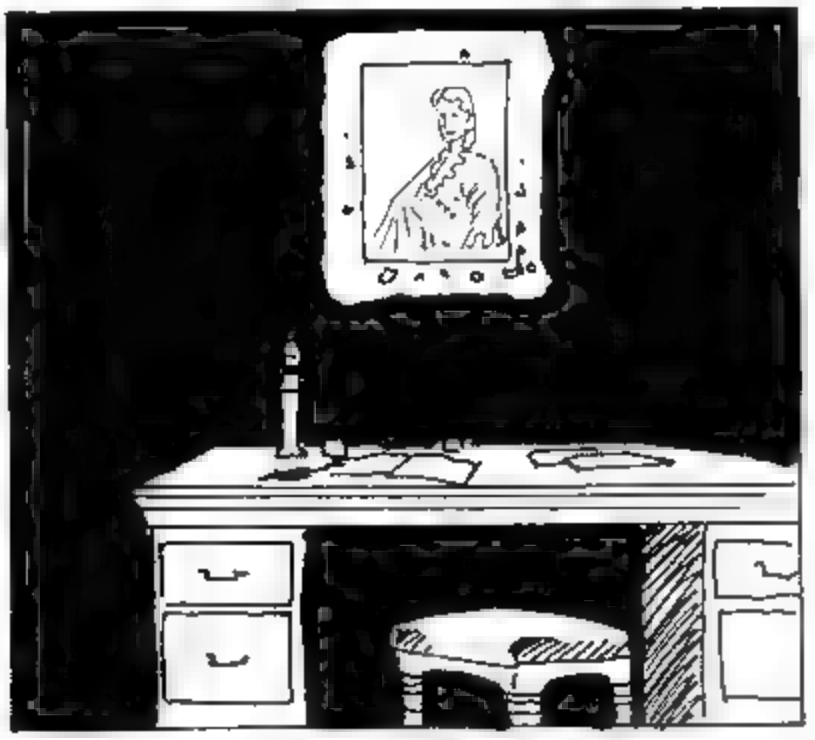
AND YOU ASK FOR THE PICTURE YOU THINK LIKE ME, TO HANG IN YOUR ROOM.

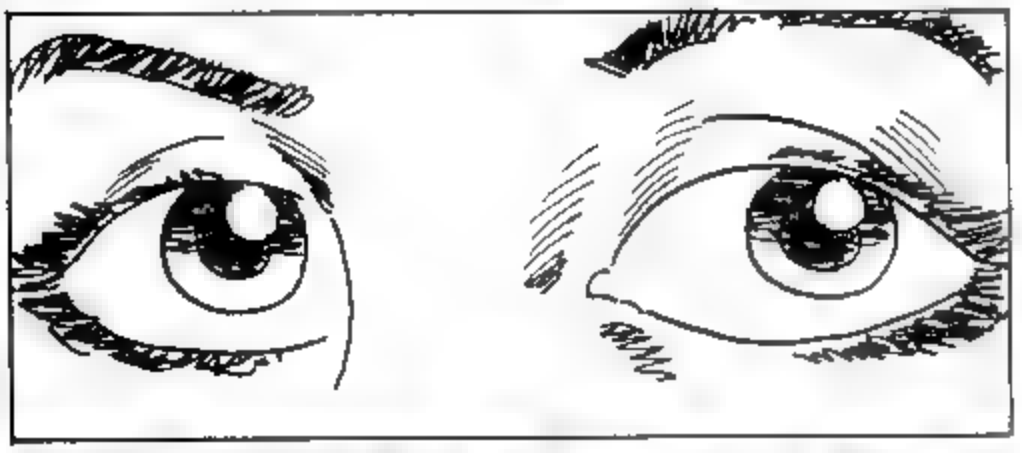
HOW ROMANTIC YOU ARE, CARMILLA.

WHENEVER YOU TELL ME YOUR STORY, IT WILL BE MADE UP CHIEFLY OF SOME ONE GREAT ROMANCE.

I TOLD YOU ONCE, I HAVE BEEN IN LOVE WITH NO ONE, AND NEVER SHALL, UNLESS IT SHOULD BE WITH YOU.

IX. INTERLUDE IV - 'ENERVATION'





KNOCK KNOCK

ENTER, PLEASE.

SARAH? YOU SHOULDN'T BE ABOUT AT *THIS* HOUR IN YOUR CONDITION!

I'M FINE. REALLY.

OF COURSE, IF YOU'D *RATHER* I GO...

NO, DEAR, NO. IS SOMETHING *TROUBLING* YOU?

THE PORTRAIT IN MY ROOM *TAUNTS* ME.

IT RESEMBLES YOU SO MUCH, BUT IT IS *NOT* YOU.

ITS EYES NEVER BLINK. ITS MOUTH NEVER SPEAKS MY NAME. I CANNOT KISS IT, OR HOLD ITS *WARM BODY* AGAINST MINE.

I *CANNOT* LOVE SOMETHING THAT ISN'T HUMAN.

AND I HAVE BEEN IN LOVE WITH ***NO ONE***, AND NEVER SHALL, UNLESS IT SHOULD BE WITH YOU.

AHHHHHH

'IN THE RAPTURE OF MY ENORMOUS HUMILIATION I LIVE IN YOUR WARM LIFE--'

SARAH.

'--AND YOU SHALL DIE--DIE, SWEETLY DIE--INTO MINE.'

OOOOOH. I'VE NEVER... UHHH. ***YES.***

'I CANNOT HELP IT.'

'AS I DRAW NEAR TO YOU, YOU, IN TURN, WILL DRAW NEAR TO OTHERS--'

YES!

TO DIE AS LOVERS MAY TO DIE TOGETHER, TO DIE THAT THEY MAY LIVE FOREVER.

"GIRLS ARE CATERPILLARS WHILE THEY LIVE IN THE WORLD--"

--TO BE FINALLY BUTTERFLIES WHEN THE SUMMER COMES.

BUT IN THE MEANTIME THEY ARE GRUBS AND LARVAE.

Ooooh... uuuuh...

X. THE DOCTOR

ANYTHING, DOCTOR SPIELBERG?

SARAH, YOU MENTIONED A SENSATION LIKE THAT OF TWO *NEEDLES* PIERCING THE SKIN--

--ON THE NIGHT WHEN YOU EXPERIENCED YOUR FIRST HORRIBLE DREAM.

YES, SIR.

PLEASE POINT TO IT NOW WITHOUT LOOKING.

HERE.

THIS SAME POINT WAS THE CENTER OF THAT *THRILL* YOU DESCRIBED LIKE THE CURRENT OF A COLD STREAM?

YES.

IS THERE ANY DANGER?

I TRUST NOT, MY DEAR. I DON'T SEE WHY YOU SHOULD NOT BEGIN *IMMEDIATELY* TO GET BETTER.

MAY I SPEAK TO YOUR *FATHER* A MOMENT?

WHAT DO YOU ADVISE?

DO NOT LET MISS SARAH BE *ALONE* FOR ONE MOMENT. THAT IS MY *ONLY* DIRECTION, BUT IT IS INDISPENSIBLE.

PAPA..?

THIS LETTER HAD BEEN DELAYED; IT IS FROM *GENERAL SPIELSDORF*. HE MAY BE HERE TODAY, OR MAY NOT COME TILL TOMORROW.

I WISH HE HAD CHOSEN ANY *OTHER* TIME TO VISIT.

DOES DR. SPIELBERG THINK ME VERY ILL?

YOU HEARD WHAT HE HAD TO SAY, SARAH.

HE THINKS, IF RIGHT STEPS ARE TAKEN, YOU WILL BE QUITE *WELL* AGAIN IN A DAY OR TWO.

WHAT DOES HE THINK IS THE MATTER?

NOTHING! YOU MUST NOT *PLAGUE* ME WITH QUESTIONS!

I'M SORRY, LITTLE SWEET.

IT'S ALRIGHT, PAPA.

YOU SHALL KNOW ALL ABOUT IT IN A DAY OR TWO: THAT IS ALL *I* KNOW.

"IN THE MEAN-TIME, I WOULD LIKE US TO GO VISIT THE ***PRIEST*** THIS AFTERNOON.

"HIS HOME LIES NEAR THE RUINS OF KARNSTEIN."

WHAT SAY YOU, ME, MADAM PERRODON, AND CARMILLA RIDE THE ***CARRIAGE*** THERE AND HAVE A PIC-NIC ?

OH, PAPA, THAT WOULD BE ***WONDERFUL!***

THANK YOU!

OH, MY! NOW ***THIS*** IS THE LITTLE GIRL I KNOW.

I MUST TELL CARMILLA RIGHT AWAY.

SHE WILL BE OVERJOYED!

XI. THE GENERAL

"I NOW WRITE, AFTER AN INTERVAL OF MORE THAN TEN YEARS, WITH A TREMBLING HAND -

"--WITH A CONFUSED AND HORRIBLE RECOLLECTION OF CERTAIN OCCURRENCES AND SITUATIONS, IN THE ORDEAL THROUGH WHICH I WAS UNCONSCIOUSLY PASSING.

"CARMILLA HAD NOT YET RISEN FOR THE DAY.

"WE'D LEFT A MESSAGE FOR HER WITH THE SERVANTS AS TO OUR DAY'S DESTINATION."

WHOA.. GENERAL!

SOMETHING VERY DIFFERENT. I MEAN TO *UNEARTH* SOME OF THOSE FINE PEOPLE

I HOPE, BY GOD'S BLESSING, TO ACCOMPLISH A PIOUS *SACRILEGE* HERE--

--WHICH WILL *RELIEVE* OUR EARTH OF CERTAIN MONSTERS, AND ENABLE HONEST PEOPLE TO SLEEP IN THEIR BEDS WITHOUT BEING *ASSAILED* BY MURDERERS.

THE HOUSE OF KARNSTEIN HAS BEEN LONG EXTINCT: A HUNDRED YEARS AT LEAST.

MY DEAR WIFE WAS MATERNALLY DESCENDED FROM THE KARNSTEINS.

BUT THE NAME AND TITLE HAVE LONG CEASED TO EXIST. THE CASTLE IS A RUIN; THE VERY *VILLAGE* IS DESERTED.

QUITE TRUE, TOBIAS.

I HAVE HEARD A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THAT SINCE I LAST SAW YOU; A GREAT DEAL THAT WILL *ASTONISH* YOU.

"YOU SAW MY NIECE, MY WARD -- MY CHILD, I MAY CALL HER."

"YES, POOR THING! WHEN I SAW HER LAST SHE CERTAINLY WAS QUITE LOVELY."

SHE HAD BECOME AN OBJECT OF VERY DEAR *INTEREST* TO ME. THE YEARS THAT REMAIN TO ME ON EARTH MAY NOT BE VERY LONG--

--BUT BY GOD'S MERCY I HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH A SERVICE TO MANKIND BEFORE I DIE.

HOW FAR IS IT TO THE RUINS?

ABOUT HALF A LEAGUE.

LET ME TELL YOU ALL.

THE NIGHT FROM WHICH MY *SORROW* DATES WAS DEVOTED TO A MAGNIFICENT *MASQUERADE* GIVEN BY COUNT CARLSFELD FOR HIS ILLUSTRIOUS VISITOR, THE GRAND DUKE CHARLES.

"THE COUNT'S SCHLOSS LIES ABOUT SIX LEAGUES TO THE OTHER SIDE OF KARNSTEIN.

"MY CHILD HAD COME UNDER THE *ATTENTION* OF A CHARMING YOUNG LADY.

"THE YOUNG LADY, WHOM HER MOTHER CALLED BY THE ODD NAME MILLARCA, GOT INTO A *CONVERSATION* WITH MY WARD.

"THE DAM INTRODUCED HERSELF AS AN OLD *ACQUAINTANCE* OF MINE. SHE KNEW MY NAME, AND REFERRED TO MANY *SCENES* WHERE SHE HAD MET ME.

"HOWEVER, SHE STEADFASTLY *REFUSED* TO REVEAL HER IDENTITY TO ME.

"PRESENTLY WE WERE INTERRUPTED BY A GENTLEMAN WITH A MESSAGE.

OH, NO!

I SHALL RETURN AND INFORM MADAM LA COMTESSE WHEN HER CARRIAGE IS AT THE DOOR.

MOTHER..?

NOT NOW, CHILD.

IT WAS VERY UNLUCKY HIS SPEAKING TO ME JUST NOW AS HE DID.

THEN WE ARE TO LOSE MADAM LA COMTESSE ?

DO YOU KNOW ME NOW ?

I'M AFRAID NOT.

YOU SHALL. WE ARE OLDER AND BETTER FRIENDS THAN YOU PERHAPS SUSPECT.

THIS MOMENT A PIECE OF NEWS HAS REACHED ME LIKE A THUNDERBOLT. I MUST SET OUT NOW AND TRAVEL BY A DEVIOUS ROUTE, NEARLY A HUNDRED MILES.

I AM DETERRED BY THE COMPULSORY ***RESERVE*** I PRACTICE FROM MAKING A SINGULAR REQUEST OF YOU.

THE WOMAN ASKED IF I WOULD CONSENT TO TAKE ***CHARGE*** OF HER DAUGHTER DURING HER ABSENCE.

MILLARCA'S HORSE HAD SUPPOSEDLY FALLEN AT A ***HUNT*** SHE HAD RECENTLY RIDDEN OUT TO WITNESS.

HER LAST CHARGE WAS THAT NO ATTEMPT WAS TO BE MADE TO LEARN ABOUT HER. SHE PROMISED ***COUNT CARLSFELD*** KNEW HER REASONS.

SOON AFTER MY DEAR CHILD BEGAN TO LOSE HER LOOKS AND HEALTH. SHE WAS AT FIRST VISITED BY APPALLING DREAMS--

--THEN, SHE FANCIED, BY A SPECTER SOMETIMES RESEMBLING MILLARCA, SOMETIMES IN THE SHAPE OF A ***BEAST*** WALKING AROUND THE FOOT OF HER BED.

LASTLY CAME SENSATIONS. ONE LIKE THE FLOW OF AN ICY *STREAM* AGAINST HER BREAST, ANOTHER LIKE A PAIR OF LARGE *NEEDLES* PIERCING HER SKIN.

YOU KNOW ENOUGH OF WHAT FOLLOWS TO SUFFICE, EXCEPT MILLARCA *DISAPPEARED* IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING MY WARD'S DEATH

THE CHURCH IS THIS WAY, GENERAL

THANK YOU, TOBIAS.

AND THIS WAS ONCE PART OF THE *PALATIAL RESIDENCE* OF THE KARNSTEINS!

IT WAS A BAD FAMILY, AND HERE IT'S BLOOD-STAINED ANNALS ARE WRITTEN.

CHOCK! CHOCK!

WHAT'S THAT?

SOUNDS LIKE AN AXE.

SAY, THERE! WOODMAN!

AYE, S.R?

I AM IN SEARCH OF THE GRAVE OF MILLARCA, COUNTESS OF KARNSTEIN.

HOLD ON!

WE HAVE A PORTRAIT, AT HOME, OF MIRCALLA; SHOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IT?

TIME ENOUGH, DEAR FRIEND.

I BELIEVE THAT I HAVE SEEN THE *ORIGINAL*.

WHAT! WHY SHE HAS BEEN *DEAD* MORE THAN A CENTURY.

NOT SO DEAD AS *YOU* FANCY, I AM TOLD.

I'M AFRAID I CAN'T HELP YOU TRACK DOWN THAT GRAVE, SIR.

CAN ANYONE?

THERE IS AN OLD MAN, A RANGER OF THIS FOREST PRESENTLY SOJOURNING AT THE PRIEST'S, TWO MILES AWAY.

HE CAN POINT OUT EVERY *MONUMENT* OF THE OLD KARNSTEIN FAMILY.

HAVE YOU BEEN LONG EMPLOYED ABOUT THIS FOREST ?

MY FAMILY HAS FOR GENERATIONS.

HOW CAME THIS VILLAGE TO BE DESERTED ?

IT WAS TROUBLED BY *REVENANTS*, MADAM.

SEVERAL WERE TRACKED TO THEIR GRAVES, THERE DETECTED BY THE USUAL TESTS, AND *EXTINGUISHED* IN THE USUAL WAYS, BUT NOT UNTIL MANY OF THE VILLAGERS WERE KILLED.

"EVEN THEN THE VILLAGE WAS NOT RELIEVED. BUT A MORAVIAN NOBLEMAN, SKILLED IN SUCH AFFAIRS, HEARD HOW MATTERS WERE AND VISITED THE VILLAGE TO DELIVER IT FROM ITS TORMENTOR.

"THERE BEING A BRIGHT MOON THAT NIGHT, THE MORAVIAN ASCENDED THE TOWER OF THE CHAPEL HERE, FROM WHENCE HE COULD SEE THE CHURCHYARD BENEATH HIM.

"HE WATCHED UNTIL THE *VAMPIRE* CAME OUT OF HIS GRAVE, AND PLACE NEAR IT THE LINEN CLOTHES IN WHICH HE HAD BEEN FOLDED

"CARRYING THE LINEN BACK TO HIS PERCH, THE MORAVIAN *TAUNTED* THE VAMPIRE TO FOLLOW HIM.

"ACCEPTING HIS INVITATION, THE VAMPIRE BEGAN TO CLIMB THE STEEPLE...

". AND AS SOON AS HE HAD REACHED THE BATTLEMENTS, THE MORAVIAN, WITH A STROKE OF HIS SWORD--

"THE STRANGER CUT THE VAMPIRE'S *HEAD* OFF, AND NEXT DAY *DELIVERED* IT AND THE CORPSE TO THE VILLAGERS, WHO DULY IMPALED AND BURNED THEM.

THIS MORAVIAN NOBLEMAN HAD *AUTHORITY* TO REMOVE THE TOMB OF MiRCALLA, WHICH HE DID EFFECTUALLY.

CAN YOU POINT OUT WHERE IT STOOD ?

NO, SIR

NOT A LIVING SOUL COULD TELL YOU THAT NOW. BESIDES, THEY SAY HER BODY WAS *REMOVED*--

"--BUT NO ONE IS SURE OF THAT EITHER."

OH, PAPA! *LOOK!*

CARMILLA IS HERE!

DON'T TELL ME YOU WALKED ALL THIS WAY, CHILD ?

IT WAS QUITE PLEASANT ..

YOU!

GENERAL ! DON'T !

MURDERER ! MONSTER !

GAA-RRRGH!

GOOD GOD, GENERAL, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT ?

SHE... SHE CALLED HERSELF CARMILLA ?

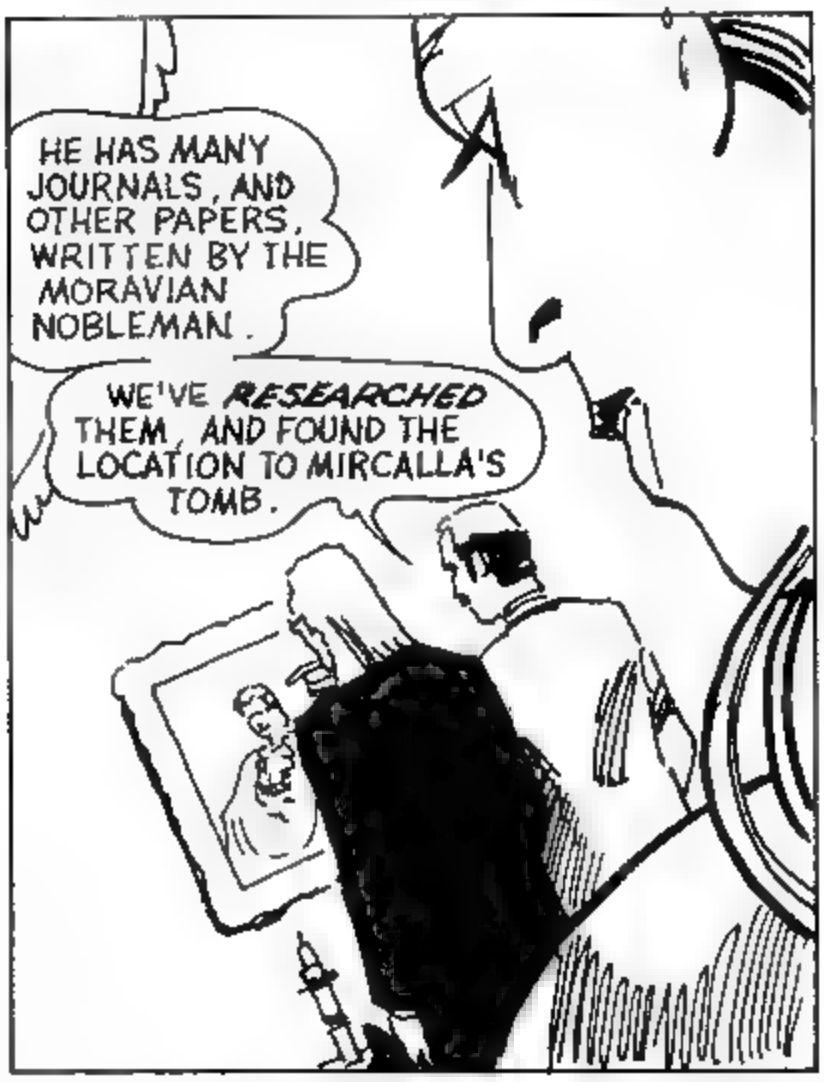
CARMILLA, YES

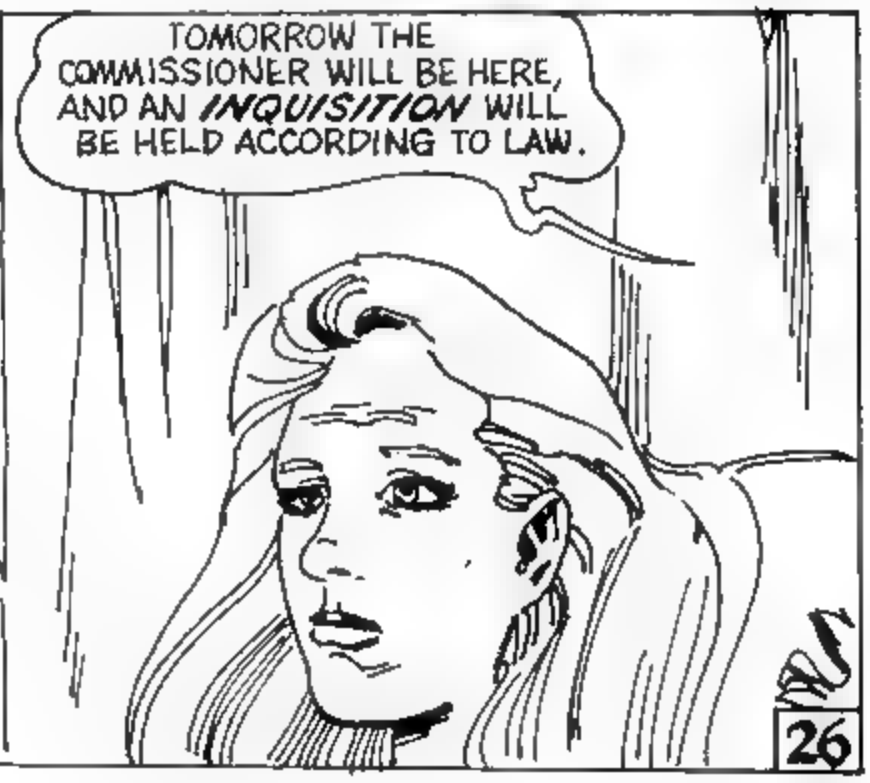
AYE, THAT IS MILLARCA ! THAT IS THE SAME PERSON WHO LONG AGO WAS CALLED MILLARCA, COUNTESS KARNSTEIN !

POOR CHILD, DRIVE TO THE CLERGY-MAN'S HOUSE. STAY THERE TILL WE COME.

MAY YOU NEVER BEHOLD CARMILLA MORE; YOU WILL NOT FIND HER HERE.

XII. INTERLUDE V: 'ORDEAL'


HE HAS MANY JOURNALS, AND OTHER PAPERS, WRITTEN BY THE MORAVIAN NOBLEMAN.
WE'VE *RESEARCHED* THEM, AND FOUND THE LOCATION TO MIRCALLA'S TOMB.



XIII. 'EXECUTION'

THUNK THUNK

'X' MARKS THE SPOT, GENTLEMEN. BREACH HERE.

BUT IT LOOKS LIKE PART OF THE WALL.

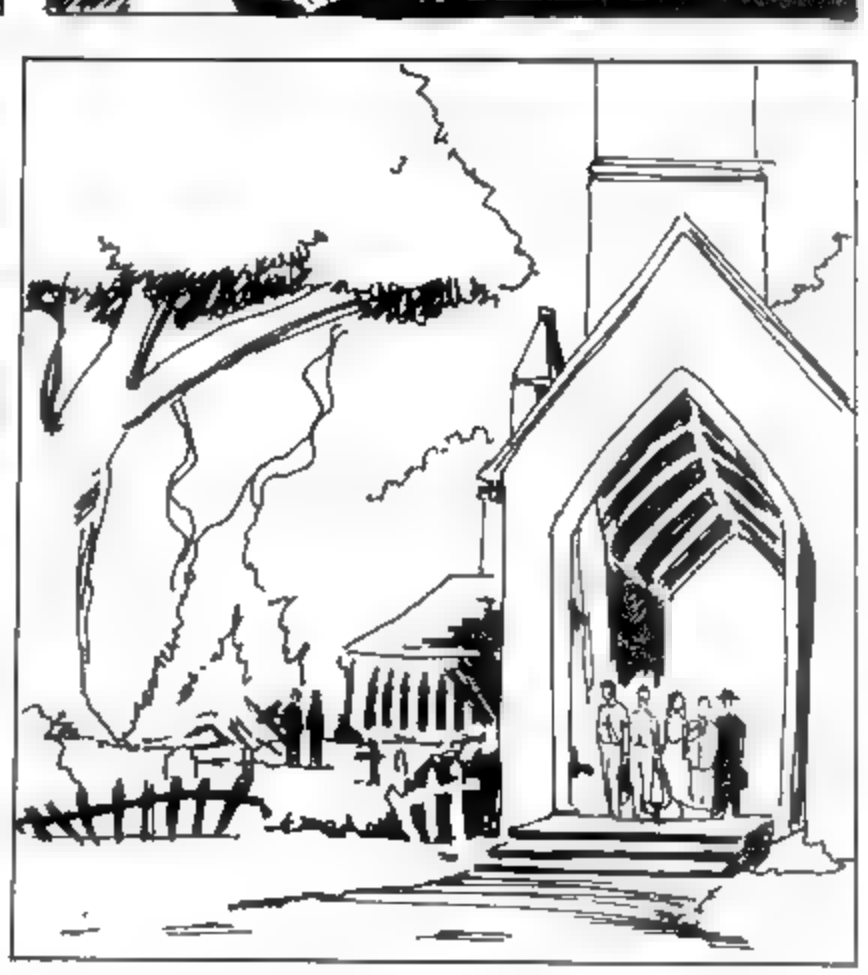
AN *EXCELLENT* DISGUISE, DON'T YOU THINK, COMMISSIONER?

"NO *CADAVEROUS* SMELL EXHALED FROM THE COFFIN THE FEATURES, THOUGH A HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS HAD PASSED SINCE HER FUNERAL, WERE *TINTED* WITH THE WARMTH OF LIFE.

"IT WAS LONG BEFORE THE *TERROR* OF RECENT EVENTS SUBSIDED; AND TO THIS HOUR THE *IMAGE* OF CARMILLA RETURNS TO MEMORY WITH AMBIGUOUS ALTERATIONS--

"--SOMETIMES THE PLAYFUL, LANGUID GIRL--

"--SOMETIMES THE WRITHING FIEND I SAW IN THE RUINED CHURCH--



"--AND OFTEN FROM A REVERIE I HAVE STARTED, FANCYING I HEARD THE LIGHT STEP OF CARMILLA AT MY BEDROOM DOOR."

GOOD-BYE.

The End

CARMILLA
A
A • MARVEL COMICS • #4 (of 6) •
Canada

PROLOGUE: *ILLUSIONS*

SARAH ? WHERE ARE YOU, SARAH ?

IT'S ME. KIM. YOU CAN COME OUT

WE'RE ALL ALONE. IT'S PERFECTLY-

SAFE! SARAH ?! WHERE DID YOU COME FROM ?

DON'T BE SKITTISH, KIMBERLY. YOU'RE CORRECT. WE'RE ALL ALONE.

I WANT YOU
O KNOW I'M NOT
RE *WHY* I CAME
MEAN...I MEAN
I'VE NEVER...

ACCEPTED A WOMAN'S *ADVANCES* BEFORE ?

IT'S SICK, ISN'T IT ? WANTING TO BE WITH A *WOMAN*.. LIKE YOU SHOULD BE A MAN ?

ISN'T THIS WRONG ?

IT'S NOT UNNATURAL, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU MEAN

I WANT TO BE *NORMAL*-- BUT I CAN'T GET YOU OUT OF MY THOUGHTS!

DON'T BE ASHAMED. I HAVE THAT AFFECT ON MANY PEOPLE.

I DON'T DOUBT IT YOU ARE SO BEAUTIFUL, SARAH.

IT'S NOT COMELINESS THAT *ATTRACTS* YOU TO ME, BUT YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH.

SUFFICE TO SAY ALL I HAVE DO IS LOOK AT YOU, TOUCH YOU, AND I'VE *COCOONED* YOU IN WEBS, DRAPED YOU IN DEATH.

"IT'S ALL SO EASY. *TOO* EASY, AFTER ALL THESE YEARS.

"YOU CAN'T HELP YOURSELF NOW; THE HUNT ALWAYS SEEMS TO BE OVER BEFORE IT BEGINS."

I WAS IN LOVE ONCE, NOT TOO LONG AGO--*UHMMM*-- WITH A GIRL WHO *BETRAYED* ME.

IT WAS ONLY NATURAL. YOUR KIND ALWAYS REJECT MINE--

--IF YOU LEARN *TOO* MUCH ABOUT US.

I DON'T THINK I COULD *REJECT* YOU, SARAH-- *OH!*

YOU ARE.. VERY... *BEAUTIFUL*, KIMBERLY. BELIEVE ME.

"BUT I *CAN'T* LOVE. NOT EVEN AFTER OUR LIPS BRUSH AND BITE, OR MY FINGERS MEASURE AND MY TONGUE TASTES THE INSIDE OF YOU.

"I'M TOO OLD."

"MY EYES CHERISH YOU AND MY SKIN ACHES FOR YOU. RIGHT NOW, I FEEL ALMOST ALIVE."

YOUR MOUTH... PLEASE, SARAH... YOU PROMISED.

YES KIMBERLY. WHATEVER YOU WANT.

"IT'S ONLY NATURAL. THE WHOLE THING FROM START TO FINISH."

YES! *PLEASE, YES!* I DON'T WANT THIS TO EVER STOP! IT'S SO RIGHT!

"OH, KIMBERLY-- DELICIOUS KIM. FORGIVE ME."

DON'T STOP SARAH! FINISH ME!

"I'M ONLY DOING WHAT I MUST TO SURVIVE."

SARAH
SAR-AHHHHH!

MY REAL NAME IS *MIRCALLA*. I AM A *VAMPIRE*.

I'M GOING TO DRAIN YOU OF BLOOD--OOOH, YES--LIKE A LEACH.

IT'S QUITE MUNDANE, FAR FROM UNHOLY. BUT THERE IS A CURSE ATTACHED.

YOU WON'T EVEN CARE UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE. YOU WANT DEATH *NOW* AS MUCH AS YOU WANTED ME.

"YES. MAYBE MORE."

"WE'RE BOTH COGS. THERE'S NO TRUE LOVE IN THE WORLD. LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE, IT'S JUST AN ILLUSION INHERENT TO REALITY."

OH! OH, THAT'S-- DELIGHTFUL.

Saraaahhhh...

SARAH?

SARAH!

WHA...?

YOU LOOK ENCHANTING TONIGHT, COUNTESS. DID YOU LEAVE THE POOR GIRL ENOUGH *BLOOD* TO ASSUAGE UNDUE SUSPICIONS?

I'M SURE YOU'LL LET ME KNOW, HJALMAR.

AFTER ALL, THIS IS WHAT YOU DO BEST. GO AHEAD AND COMPLETE THE CYCLE.

AS YOU REQUIRE, COUNTESS.

THE SUCCUBUS IS GONE, CHILD; THE INCUBUS HAS ARRIVED.

BLOOD HAS *HAD* ITS BLOOD -

--AND NOW THE REAPER MUST COLLECT HIS WAGES.

RUUUMBLL

drip
drip
drip

FWAP

SWEET MOTHER OF JESUS!

MISS O'HARA! NO! OH, NO!

I. PUBLIC RELATIONS

I DON'T *WANT* EXCUSES! I WANT *RESULTS!*

VITUS, THE POLICE ARE DOING A FINE JOB. THEY'LL FIND THE KILLER.

I DON'T GIVE A *RAT'S ASS* ABOUT THE POLICE OR THE KILLER, CALVIN.

I'M WORRIED ABOUT THE *NEWSPAPERS!*

THE POLICE *ARE* BEING CO-OPERATIVE, AGREEING TO OUR NEWS BLACK-OUT.

BESIDES, KIM O'HARA *WASN'T* A NAME. HER DEATH *ISN'T* BIG NEWS.

EPHRAIM, YOU *YUTZ!* A HOLLYWOOD ACTRESS JUST GOT *BUTCHERED* ON THE SET OF A WILKIE COLLINS' MOVIE!

THAT IS *HUGE* FUCKING NEWS!

VARIETY IS GOING TO HAVE A FIELD DAY, AND YOU CAN BET YOUR BOTTOM DOLLAR WE'LL BE THE LEAD STORY ON TONIGHT'S "MARCH OF TIME."

WAKE UP AND SMELL THE *COFFEE*, FELLAS. THIS IS WHAT IVY LEE AND WALTER LIPPMANN CLASSIFY AS A PUBLIC RELATIONS *NIGHTMARE!*

MAYBE NOT, VITUS.

AND HOW'S THAT?

LIKE YOU ALWAYS SAY, "A GOOD *OFFENSE* IS THE BEST DEFENSE." WE *NEED* TO BE AGGRESSIVE. TURN THIS TO *OUR* ADVANTAGE.

FORGET PRESS AGENTRY. LET'S HOLD A PRESS *CONFERENCE* THIS AFTERNOON, EVEN INVITE THE TRADES.

SHOW 'EM THE *SCENE* OF THE CRIME. TELL 'EM WHAT WE KNOW.

GIVE THEM BIOS ON O'HARA, MAYBE HAVE A POLICE DETECTIVE ON HAND TO ANSWER *QUESTIONS* ABOUT THEIR INVESTIGATION.

WHAT ABOUT THE PICTURE? IT'S *CURSED!*

SARAH KARNSTEIN'S SCARED TO DEATH. SHE WON'T WORK ON THAT SOUNDSTAGE AGAIN.

OH, SCREW HER! WHO CARES *WHAT* FILM SHE STARS IN FOR US--

"--AS LONG AS SHE FULFILLS HER CONTRACT."

ALL RIGHT. WE'LL TELL THE PRESS THIS AFTERNOON THAT WE'VE CANCELLED PRODUCTION ON *THE MOONSTONE* INDEFINITELY.

ANY SUGGESTIONS ON WHAT STORY WE PUT KARNSTEIN IN NEXT? WE NEED SOMETHING *SPECIFIC* BY THIS AFTERNOON.

LOOK NO FURTHER, VITUS. I'VE GOT THE PERFECT PROJECT!

YOU'RE JUST FULL OF BRIGHT IDEAS, AIN'T YA, CALVIN BECK? WHY DON'T I JUST GO AHEAD AND HAND YOU THE MOP ON THIS MESS?

FINE.

ON TWO CONDITIONS. I GET CARTE BLANCHE ON THIS PRODUCTION, AND-- MAX NODURFT GETS TO DIRECT.

HE STILL *SCHTOOPING* THAT CHINK?

VITUS! WHO CARES?

THE *PUBLIC* CARES, CALVIN, THAT'S WHO! BESIDES, NODURFT WILL DEMAND WE HIRE THAT FRENCH FOSSIL, GEORGES ORLY.

YOU WANT TO PRODUCE INSTEAD, EPHRAIM? ANYONE?

THEN IT'S YOUR BALL, CALVIN, BUT I WANT TO SEE YOUR SCREENPLAY AND MEET WITH NODURFT A.S.A.P.

THE REST OF YOU, GET BACK TO WORK!